

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, September 22. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**ether Witchcrafts or Possessions are credible? and whether Natural Distempers ha'nt often preternatural Effects which may be judg'd by some to be the Work of the Devil?

Answ. That Witchcrafts are Credible, we have formerly prov'd, as far as either *Humane* or *Divine Autonomy* can do it. *Possessions* indeed some *Divines* deny, but they have another Word call'd *Obsessions*, which they use instead on't, to signifie something very like it, if not the same thing. *Possessions* they say were only proper to the time of our *Saviour*, tho' they have no ground that we know of, for such an Assertion, either from *Scripture* or *sound Reason* — On the contrary, tho' we are sensible there have been very many *Cheats of this kind*, yet we believe there's Reason not to think all Instances we have thereof are to be reckon'd in that Number. *Possessions* we are sure there were after our *Saviours* time, since we read of the Man in whom an *evil spirit* was, whom the seven Sons of *Sæva* Exorcised so long, 'till he fell upon 'em and beat 'em out of the Houle naked and wounded. *Possessions* we are almost as sure there were after the *Times of the Apostles*, namely, in *Tertullian's* Dayes, who speaks of 'em as a thing frequent and notorious, and appeals to the *Heathens* themselves concerning them, and that *Power* which the *Christians* had over the *Devils* who feiz'd on the *Bodies of Men*. That there have been *Possessions* since, even in our own *Age*, we see no Reason to deny, since not only *strange Voices* have been heard from the *Bodies* of the poor tormented *Creatures*, which we grant might be *Natural*, not only *Hair*, and other *strange substances* have been *Vomited* after a *strange manner*, which yet might be *Natural* too — not only their *Limbs* and *Bodies* have been *strangely writhed*, and very odd *Pains* all over 'em, which might, we own, be still *Natural*; but they have spoken divers *Languages*, tho' utterly unlearn'd; they have reveal'd *Secrets*, disclosed what pass'd at a *distance*, reveal'd *futureties*, *Vomited Pins* and *Stones* and *Nails* to a prodigious *quantity*, been carryed in the *Air*, and hung up against a *Wall* with no *visible Support*, all which we dese all the *World* to prove *possible* by the power of *Nature* only.

Quest. 2. *Want and ill Company induce a young Man to take ill Courses for some time* — afterwards he gets into *Business*, and *Maries a Virtuous Woman*, by whom he has *Children*, and by *Affiance of Friends*, and his honest Endeavours for several *Years*, is *bless'd with a Competence just sufficient to support his Family*: *Query, Whether he is in Justice obliged forthwith to part with all, to make satisfaction as far as he can, while he lives, or leave it to the Poor when he dies, and thereby expose his Family to Want and Beggery, who had no hand in the Wrong, nor any advantage by it?* — or what is fittest for him to do in this *Cafe*, since he knows not all the *Parties* whom he has *wronged*?

Answ. We have printed this Question at large, as 'twas sent us, because we esteem it a very singular *Cafe*, and our Judgment concerning it is as follows —

That he ought in the first place very seriously to repent the *Injury* which he has done — but this we hope he has already done, by his being so concerned for *restitution*.

That if any of his ill-gotten *Goods remain*, he ought forthwith to restore 'em, whatever the Inconvenience might be to his own private Fortunes — But this if he proposes the Question fairly, there does not, since he says his *Family receiv'd no advantage* by those Injuries he had formerly done to others.

That he ought seriously to put the *Question*, Whether no *Retrenchments* might be made in his own or his Family's *Expences*; which if possible, he ought to do it, tho' they liv'd never so *meanly*, without wanting *Necessaries*, in order to restore as much as he can of what he had formerly *unjustly taken away*.

That if ever he is in better *Circumstances*, he ought to make full *reparation*, even to the *Interest* of what he has taken, either to the *Persons injur'd*; or if that can't possibly be, to the *poor*, who are *God's Trustees* in such a *Cafe*.

That, to come to the *Pinch*, we think it hard for any one to *ruine and starve his innocent Family*, because he himself has formerly been an *ill Man*, which he says he must do if he shou'd forthwith make *satisfaction*. Nay, 'tis our *Judgment* that *God* does not require he shou'd do so, especially when, as he says, they *had no Hand in the Injustice, nor Benefit by it*; and that by the *affiance* of *Friends*, possibly his *Wives* as well as his own, he was put into a *Capacity to live honestly*, and maintain his *Family*; and if he ought not to beggar 'em while he is *alive*, we see little or leis *Reason* why he shou'd do it at his *Death*, when he himself is like to feel none of the hardships his *Family* will suffer thereby; tho' if he can make *Reparation*, and leave 'em a *competent*, tho' not a *plentiful Estate*, he *ought to do it*.

This is all we have to lay on so *Nice a Subject* — which being of such great moment, we advise the *Querist* not *wholly to rely upon our Judgment herein*, but *Consult* some *grave and reverend Divine*, who on knowing the whole *Concern* and *Circumstances* thereof, may give him a *more certain and entire satisfaction*.

And if there be any *good Man* who shall be offended with what we have advanc'd on this *Subject*, we desire his *further Thoughts* thereon, as always professing our selves as *willing to retract or learn*, as to teach or inform others,

Quest. 3. *What sort of Matter our Bodies shall be made of in the other World?*

Answ. It does not yet appear what we shall be, that is, we can give no full or exact *Accours of the future Condition* either of our *Bodies* or *Souls*; yet this in general we know, that as our *Souls* shall be *impeccable*, so our *Bodies* shall be *incorruptible* — that they shall be *glorified*, and therefore must be *glorious* and *luminous*, like the *glorious Body* of our *Saviour* at the *Transfiguration*. It's also probable that the *matter* whereof they are composed shall be so *refined in quality*, and perhaps so *diminish'd in quantity*, that we shall be in that *estate* *imperceptible* — that our *Bodies* shall be no longer *Clogs to our Souls*, but obey their *Commands*, and indeu the *Nature of Spirits* in their *quick and imperceptible Motion* from one *Term* to another.

Quest. 4. *Whether the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were two different Trees?*

Answ. So *Antiquity* generally held, so *Josephus* thought, and delivers it as the receiv'd *Opinion* of his *Countrymen*. In his *Antiquities*, cap. 2. p. 4. of his *English Translation* — among the *Trees of Eden*, says he, were the *Tree of Life*, and another, the *Tree of Knowledge*. So the *Scripture* seems also not obscurely to assert. Thus Gen. 2. 9. Out of the ground *God made every Tree to grow* — the *Tree of Life also, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* — and yet more plainly after the Fall, Cap. 3. V. 22. Behold, says *God*, the *Man is become as one of us, to know Good and Evil*; that is, upon his eating of the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* — *And now least he put forth his Hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and Eat and Live for ever* — What's the meaning of that *Also*, if the *Trees* were all one, and what wou'd it be but a *distinction* without a *difference*; nay, a *fruitless Caution*, and besides an impossible one — if he was to be turn'd out of *Paradise* least he shou'd eat of that *Tree* which he *had eaten of already*. Besides, the *Effects* of the *Tree of Life* were *Life*, as appears both by its *Name*, and by the *supposition* here made, that on the *tasting* thereof *Man* might live for ever; (nor can we see any need of an *Irony*, which is commonly supposed in this place) whereas the *Effects* of the *Tree of Knowledge* were quite contra-

ry. In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely dye; and what can differ more than Life and Death? In the mean time we must acknowledge there wants not some Conjectures from the History which seems to make for the other side, and wou'd perwade us it might be one Tree only; for Cap. 2. v. 9. before mentioned, we read *The Tree of Life* also in the midst of the Garden; and Cap. 3. v. 3. the Woman tells the Serpent, who very probably had but a Confused Knowledge of those things before he got it out of the Woman, as it shou'd seem by his first *Question* to her, she tells him the *Forbidden Tree* was that which was in the *midst of the Garden*. It's plain the Tree they eat of was the *Tree of Knowledge*, the Tree they eat of was that in the midst of the Garden, the *Tree of Life* was in the midst of the Garden, therefore one would think the *Tree of Knowledge* shou'd be the *Tree of Life*. But notwithstanding this, we are rather inclined to our former Opinion, and believe it's not very difficult to get *clear of this Objection* --- because there might be *two Trees* planted about the *middle of the Garden*, encompas'd perhaps by all the rest --- which if once granted, the difficulty wou'd vanish; and because the Words in the 9th. Verse of the 2d. Chapter may be transposed, or false Pointed, an alteration in either of which wou'd make the sense very plain: For the *Tree of Life* in the midst of the Garden, and the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* --- if we shou'd read, the *Tree of Life*, and, in the midst of the Garden the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, that Phrase, *in the midst of the Garden*, belonging to the following words, the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, not the *Tree of Life*, which goes before. This is our Judgment, from which we are not Angry if any differ, and shall alter our own when they give us better Reasons.

Quest. 5. *What Physical Alteration was made in the Body of Adam by the Fall?*

Answe. We believe, and none doubts that his Body was Created without any *actual Disease*, as well as his Mind without any *actual sin*, tho' both with a possibility of either. Now had he for some time obey'd God's Command in abstaining from the forbidden Fruit, it's very probable his Mind had been confirm'd by God's Grace, as *Angels and good Men now are*, and his Body had also been preserv'd *incorruptible*, and in a fit Tenor for the Operations of his Soul by eating of the *Tree of Life*, whose *noble qualities* wou'd have corrected or fix'd the mutability of *Matter*, and restrain'd or united those *contending Principles and Humours*, which by a *Necessity* of Nature were in the Body of Man. Now upon his Fall he was forbidden to taste of this *Tree of Life*, as God himself fayes, *least he should Eat and Live for ever*; and for that very end he was thrust out of Paradise, and a *Flaming sword* placed before the Gate. The *Physical Alteration* then which was made in his Body we esteem to be chiefly a *testing loose of all those Principles and Seeds of Diseases wherewith he was made*, all which had he stood wou'd have been restrain'd, or employ'd to a better Use, as it also wou'd have been in the *Affections of the Mind*, which are now turn'd into *Vices and Tormenting Passions*. Besides this, the *Change of Climate, Change of Dye, nay, Change of the whole Creation with the Fall of Man*; (and such a *Change* it has undoubtedly undergone, since we read it now *goans for a Renovation*;) These ill Accidents, with continual *Labour* for himself any his Family, and other Domestick Vexations, and the irregular Motions of his Mind, his now unruly Passions and Affections, and perhaps as much as all, the quick and violent *Sense* of what he had *lost*, *Eden* it self being not improbably always in his *sight* as well as *Memory*. We say all this together was sufficient to make those fatal Alterations in his Body which his Children have receiv'd from him, and still labour under; and such they were, as are the common and necessary Effects of those Causes already mentioned.

Quest. 6. *Why Adam and Eve after the Fall sow'd Figg-leaves together, and made themselves Aprons?*

Answe. Why do Men now sow Cloth together to make themselves *Breeches*?

Quest. 7. *Is there any such thing as Natural Modesty (in the Case above-mentioned) and has not Bergerac Reason for that contrary Custom which he introduces in his World in the Sun?*

Answe. That Customs may do well enough in an *Imaginary World*, but will hardly ever take in a World inhabited by any thing that's *humane* --- and shou'd that *mad Author* who recommends it himself have practis'd it, he wou'd have been *Chain'd for his Pains*, and treated like a *Mad-man* as he was, almost in any part of our World. But 'tis no wonder to find one *ridicule Modestly*, who does as much by *Piety* it self, any more than that our *Atheistical Sparks* shou'd follow his steps, and when they had first parted with *Religion*, send their small *Humanity* after it. But let 'em say what they please, there is still such a thing as *Natural Modesty*, if we can ever know what is *Natural*, and there certainly must be so, which all Nations and all Men practise, and own to be so. They can't have *Modesty* in Climates where there's no *necessity*, and if there shou'd be any found so *brutish* as to be willing to neglect it, *Nature* her self has done it for 'em in such a manner as she has not to any of the rest of the World.

Quest. 8. *Why does our Saviour use that odd Similitude of a Camels going through the Eye of a Needle, and what's the genuine meaning of that Text?*

Answe. It betrays a weak Judgment rather than shows an acute one, to quarrel with any thing that *eternal Truth* has deliver'd; we ought rather modestly and justly to question our own *Knowledge*, which is finite and determin'd, whereas the other is *unbounded and infinite*. The Customs of Nations among other things we are commonly ignorant of, tho' so easily knowable, even of those near us, much more of those so far distant, and that in Age and Time as well as Place. The *Proverbs of all Nations* are said to contain the greatest part of their *Experience and Wisdom*; and this *Similitude* most Commentators agree is founded on a *Proverb of the Jews*: Some say it alludes to a very strait and low *Gate* in *Jerusalem* call'd the *Needle-Gate*, through which the *Camels* cou'd never pass, without first unloading their Burdens or *Impediments*, which if true, were a *very beautiful and apposite simile*. But we doubt this is rather a *witty than a true Interpretation*. The Learned and indefatigable *Bochart* has another he tells us in his *Dissertation concerning the Camel*, In his *Hierozoicon*, that the Word *Camal*, which signifies a *Camel*, is also interpreted a *CABLE*, and withal tells us 'tis a *Common Proverb among the Eastern Nations*, when they speak of an *impossibility* --- "That 'tis easier for a *Cable* to be *threded through the Eye of a Needle*, --- which is a very proper and apt *Simile* --- and this of the two we esteem the more *Natural Interpretation*, leaving the Reader to embrace which he pleases.

Advertisements.

WHereas the Corporation for the Linnen Manufacture in *Ireland*, have in the *London Gazette* (on the 14th. of this Instant September 1691.) declared that their present Joint-stock, consisting of 400 Shares, shall be made up to 1000 Shares by Subscriptions at 50*l.* per Share. NOW the GOVERNOUR and ASSISTANTS of the KING and QUEEN's CORPORATION for the LINNEN MANUFACTURE in *England*, do hereby give notice that they are not only interested in 175 Shares, part of the said 400 Shares, but also have a Right to subscribe for a *Moiety*, or half part of the remaining 600 Shares, as appears by ARTICLES of AGREEMENT, under the Hands of the Governour, Deputy-Governour, and divers Assistants of the said *Irish Company*. AND the said *English Corporation* (having advised thereupon with the ablest Lawyers of this Kingdom, who have given their Opinions under their Hands that the said Agreement is valid both in Law and Equity; and that they can compel a specifick Execution of the same, and being resolved to vindicate their just and legal Rights) HAVE thought fit HEREBY to signifie so much, that all that have already subscribed, or who may hereafter subscribe for any of the said Shares, may be cautious how they subscribe or pay for the same.

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